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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

NIC-01486-1/88

21 April 1988

National Intelligence Council

MEMORANDUM FOR: See Distribution

FROM: Robert Blackwell
National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT: Warning Assessment -- USSR

1. Attached is the assessment prepared following the monthly NIO/USSR Warning and Forecast Meeting held on 19 April 1988. Comments would be most welcome.

2. The next warning meeting will be held on Tuesday, 16 May at 1400 hours in Room 7-E-62, CIA Headquarters. Please have your clearances passed and call [] with your attendance plans by COB Friday, 13 May. PLEASE NOTE: Due to the changes in the badging and entry procedures, anyone whose name and clearances have not been received by this office the day preceeding the meeting will not be admitted to the building. I solicit suggestions regarding any topics or contingencies you feel we may be overlooking and request that such recommendations be forwarded to me by COB, Wednesday, 4 May 1988.

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21 April 1988

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: National Intelligence Officer for Warning

FROM: Robert Blackwell
National Intelligence Officer for USSR

SUBJECT: April Warning and Forecast Report

1. The Leadership Situation and the Reform Debate

A. Discussion

On 19 April, intelligence community representatives met to discuss the exchange of polemics between party conservatives (the "Andreyeva letter" in the 13 March Soviet Russia) and reformers (a full-page Pravda editorial article on 5 April) and the implications of this confrontation for Gorbachev's reform agenda.

- There are some important differences within the community over the origins and implications of this dustup, especially over the extent of Second Secretary Ligachev's involvement with the Andreyeva letter.
- But judging from the meeting there is substantial agreement on critical issues: that the struggle between reformers and conservatives for control of the party is reaching a decisive stage as the June party conference approaches, that the Pravda editorial and subsequent developments signify a major victory for Gorbachev and reform proponents, and that Gorbachev is likely to move in the near term--if indeed he has not done so already--to effectively neutralize Ligachev's influence.

WHAT'S THE DISPUTE ABOUT? The radicalization of Gorbachev's agenda over the last two years has produced a fundamental split in the party between reformers (who want a decisive break with the command economy and rigidly centralized political system Stalin created) and conservatives (who believe tinkering will suffice and fear that Gorbachev's reforms are leading the country toward disaster). This split has reached the Politburo, where Ligachev's go-slow rhetoric has clearly established him as the conservative alternative to Gorbachev. The blistering Pravda rejoinder to the Andreyeva

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letter indicates that the dispute has come to a head as the two sides jockey for position in anticipation of the party conference.

WHO'S WINNING? Community analysts disagree on the extent of Ligachev's opposition to Gorbachev and whether he was behind the Soviet Russia attack on reform, as the Moscow rumor mill suggests. Even those who question Ligachev's association with the Soviet Russia article, however, agree that it has been used by Gorbachev and his allies as a pretext to launch a sweeping counterattack on party conservatives and to attempt to neutralize Ligachev's influence in the leadership. An incipient press campaign in support of Gorbachev's agenda since 5 April, and spreading rumors of trouble for Ligachev, suggest Gorbachev has scored a decisive victory.

OUTLOOK FOR THE NEAR TERM A decisive confrontation between conservatives and reformers in the Central Committee and the Politburo now seems likely in the run-up to the party conference. While conservatives remain powerful in the party elite--especially in the regional apparatus that forms the core of the Central Committee--the momentum now seems to be running in Gorbachev's direction. Some sort of move to neutralize Ligachev (as well as reshape the Central Committee) seems likely:

- Gorbachev could attempt to remove Ligachev from the Politburo altogether at a plenum preceding the conference.
- As a compromise, Ligachev could be kicked upstairs to replace former foreign minister Gromyko as President. Such a step, while effectively circumscribing Ligachev's influence, could be more palatable to party conservatives than an outright removal from the leadership.
- Moves to effectively strip Ligachev of his "second secretary" duties--relieving him of the important cadres and ideology portfolios--could be sufficient to neutralize his authority and signal the party ranks that those who attempt to undermine "perestroika" down below will no longer find protection at the top. Gorbachev could calculate that this solution would achieve his objectives while promoting a healing process in the party in the months ahead.

If Gorbachev is able to neutralize Ligachev in some manner, it could allow him to dominate proceedings at the party conference and give a powerful boost to the efforts of reformers to launch a decisive attack on the underpinnings of the Stalinist political and economic system. Given the magnitude of Ligachev's apparent challenge, if Gorbachev fails now to clip his wings, it will be a significant--perhaps fatal--political defeat.

B. Warning

WARNING ISSUE The Moscow summit will occur in the midst of the most dramatic ferment in the Soviet leadership in the last 30 years. NIO/USSR believes Gorbachev has strong incentives to force the leadership dispute to a conclusion before the visit to bolster his authority in the negotiations with the President and to gain control of preparations for the party conference at the end of June. There is some chance--probably less than one in five--that Ligachev will beat back this effort, casting doubt on Gorbachev's ability to press his foreign and domestic agenda. But the odds are good that he will succeed. Indeed, the summit may help him achieve his objective by providing

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an occasion in which the Politburo will want to pull together for a show of unity.

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2. Nationality Unrest

A. Discussion:

Intelligence community representatives discussed the aftermath of the Soviet leadership's recent decisions on Armenian demands for the return of Nagorno-Karabakh region in Azerbaijan. Moscow's use of carrots and sticks --refusing to review the territorial status of Nagorno-Karabakh, offering concessions in the cultural and educational sphere (for instance, improved access to Armenian television for the predominantly Armenian population of the region) and a show of military force--appear to have worked to defuse the short-term crisis. The streets have been relatively quiet and the work stoppages in the capital city of Nagorno-Karabakh effectively ended on 5 April. Over the long run, the community believes that the cultural concessions Moscow has made so far will not be sufficient to satisfy the Armenians and Soviet authorities will come under growing pressure to take more substantial steps.

B. Warning [REDACTED]

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WARNING: The upcoming 24 April anniversary of the 1915 massacre of Armenians will provide a near term indication of the stability of the fragile peace that currently prevails. The regime will probably allow Armenian activists to march to the memorial commemorating the victims of the massacre. They will attempt to use moderate leaders to control the participants but there is still a risk of serious trouble.

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3. The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan

A. Discussion:

Some consolidation of forces in country is already underway in preparation for the withdrawal. Moreover, it is increasingly clear that the

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Soviet troops will be withdrawn by unit or garrison, not by thinning as some previously had speculated. Such military operations as are under way are aimed either at clearing withdrawal routes of insurgent activity and/or a final reprovisioning of the more remote Afghan garrisons. The requirements of the withdrawal accords--which mandate the removal of 50% of the Soviet force within the first three months--means that by 15 August the only Soviet forces left in Afghanistan probably will be those in a triangle between Jalalabad, Kabul and on the road north leading to the USSR. Community analysts believe Soviet military advisors in the countryside will be withdrawn as the Soviet units depart, but expect Moscow to try to maintain an advisory presence in Kabul through the withdrawal and perhaps even afterward.

Reporting on Soviet intentions with regard to the provision of military aid to the Kabul regime is mixed, with some Soviets intimating that there won't be any need for new deliveries after May 15 and others suggesting that Soviet military aid will continue, at least until the withdrawals are complete and/or the regime falls. We already have good evidence that the Soviets will be turning over some of the equipment and consummables they have stockpiled in Afghanistan to Afghan forces as they withdraw.

B. Warning

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WARNING ISSUES: NIO/USSR believes we should expect a Soviet propaganda campaign denouncing continued assistance through Pakistan. If withdrawal becomes more complicated than anticipated, the Soviets may launch air strikes against main supply bases in Pakistan before the aid is shipped into Afghanistan.

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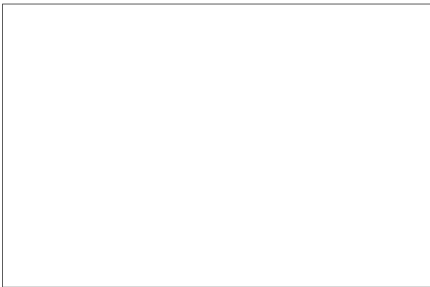
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SUBJECT: Warning Assessment--USSR

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Inside Attendees

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